Partnership Development to Address Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in New Brunswick:

Community Needs Assessment

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Introduction

Partners for Youth Inc. (PFY) is a provincial non-profit that engages New Brunswick (NB) youth in creating inclusive and equitable communities with a special focus on youth facing challenges and obstacles in their lives. Through over 20 years of innovative programming and services that promote experiential learning in supportive and rewarding environments, PFY has been witness to the changing landscapes of youth life and its relation to violence in NB communities. With the growing national focus on human trafficking for sexual exploitation (HTSE), it became apparent that the issue needed a community-based initiative to better understand the unique context of trafficking in NB and how it disproportionately impacts young women and girls.

This project aims to balance three distinct, but interconnected efforts: changing systems, supporting women and girls, and building awareness and capacity. The first step of this project was to gather data on community understandings, responses and iterations of HTSE. This report presents the findings and perspectives garnered through in-depth, sometimes difficult conversations with a wide variety to agencies, communities, and individuals.

What made some of these conversations difficult was not people's resistance to acknowledging the issues, but rather the complexity of the topic itself. There is no way to be neutral or objective about HTSE. The issue is laden with moral, personal, cultural, economic, and political ideologies. HTSE is rooted in compounding oppressions including gender and sexism, racism, criminalization, colonialism, and poverty. These oppressive contexts create a complex web of needs for women, communities, and organizations (including government and law enforcement) that need to be addressed in order to eliminate HTSE. This complexity also gives rise to conflicting ideas about how to define, understand, and challenge this form of violence. While everyone reading this can agree that no one should be forced, coerced, or manipulated into providing sexual labour or services, there is a passionate divide as to what this means, how to describe it, and how to move forward to prevent, intervene, and reduce it. As such, we need critical and nuanced perspectives on these intersecting issues to be combined with a women and girl-centred, human rights approach.

Groups and Individuals Consulted

Community consultations were conducted with two purposes: first, to learn about HTSE in the NB context, and second, to start a dialogue about trafficking and exploitation. The consultations involved semi-structured discussions with over 60 different individuals from a wide variety of agencies, programs, institutions, and experiences. Thirteen of the organizations work exclusively on issues related to women, including violence against women (VAW), gender equity, housing, and addictions recovery. Nine organizations focus on physical and/or mental health, and another nine administer programs related to housing. Five organizations manage programming specifically for youth. Additionally three law enforcement agencies and three governmental departments were consulted. For a complete list of organizations and agencies, please see Appendix A.

Two separate focus group discussions were conducted with young people (under the age of 21). Ten young women (and one young man) provided their insights on, and experiences with trafficking, exploitation, and the many interrelated social issues that they identified as contributing to, and precipitating vulnerabilities to trafficking and exploitation.

Outreach was also done to consult with sex trade workers (STWs) in Fredericton. Through these efforts two consultations were conducted with STWs: one who is currently working in the Fredericton region and another who has previously worked in Moncton. Consultations with both young people, and those working in sex industries are ongoing and will continue to inform the direction of the project.

Noticeably absent are consultations with Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik First Nations organizations and those in rural communities. There were attempts to build connections with First Nations, however efforts to meet and consult were not rejoined. The consultation also focuses on the three largest cities in New Brunswick where most services are concentrated. The more informal structures of rural communities made it difficult to identify who to connect with. Ongoing efforts to work with rural and Indigenous communities are being pursued.

Issues in Anti-trafficking Measures and Strategies

"Effective anti-trafficking practices aren't an easy sell. They don't promise simple answers or quick results. They are messy. They are costly. And they take time." Ryan Beck Turner (Program Director of the International Human Trafficking Institute, 2015)

Compounding the difficulties involved in addressing this "messy" issue are the diverging and conflicting definitions and approaches to understanding HTSE. Merely describing and defining the issue of trafficking is an emotionally and politically charged activity. Combined with a lack of legal precedent, the invisibility of trafficking, and the dynamic nature of the crime, HTSE is difficult to describe or define, let alone address or eliminate. Acknowledging and accepting the deep complexity of the issue is necessary to move toward effective and relevant solutions.

One conspicuous issue is the discourse and language around trafficking. Currently HT discourse relies heavily on legal language and complex, subjective definitions. These discourses put traffickers at the centre of discussions rather than the women and girls who have been victimized or who have survived HTSE. By de-centering experiential women, many HT discourses dehumanize women and further disempower them by removing their opportunities to reflect on, and make their own meaning of their situations. This is exacerbated by the fact that many women whose situation fits the definition of HTSE, do not actually describe or understand their situation as exploitation. Indeed, HTSE is a retrospective definition applied to a series of circumstances which must all be present to meet the definition of trafficking. In the midst of a series of events, the situation as a whole may not be visible or recognizable as HTSE. However upon reflection, or with time, the circumstances may add up to meet the definition. As such, it is important to enable women to make their own meaning and empower them to find what labels and language works for them in their stages of healing.

Disconnections between the Needs of Service Users and Services Available

"*Clients push the boundaries of what organizations can do because they are trusted*" - NB service provider

From a human rights perspective, HTSE does not have a clearly defined victim-crime-criminal relationship. Many individuals who are labelled as victims of HTSE, do not understand

their situation as exploitation. Or, they do not see themselves in the typical, mainstream victim narratives around trafficking. The perpetrators of HTSE are rarely strangers, more often they are partners, husbands, fathers, and friends who are trusted and loved. As such, when reaching out to access services and supports in NB, many women and girls do not prioritize sexual exploitation as the most prominent, critical issue they are facing.

According to many frontline service providers, when women and girls first access or encounter services and supports their immediate concerns are intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence, family violence, housing issues, and substance use and addictions. It may be that these issues are highlighted by women because they are more recognized social issues and there are services offered explicitly to women who have these experiences. Services for these indirectly related issues are critical access points for women to build support networks and develop the trusting relationships they want and desire. Indeed, it is only after the development of long-term trusting relationships with service providers that women discuss experiences of exploitation. This delay in disclosure reveals the overlapping and intersecting difficulties that women who experience exploitation face, and reveals the short-comings of how supports and services are structured from the top down.

One of these short-comings is the disconnection between what experiential women and girls want or need, and the services available or accessible to them. The moments when women and girls reach out for support are critical, short windows of opportunity. Yet long wait-times and wait-lists for services mean that many people have no choice but to remain in, or return to violent, or exploitative situations. Furthermore, there are often rigid criteria for accessing services (for example, excessive paperwork, the need for identification, a fixed address, and cooperation with law enforcement) and very few supports are offered long-term without conditions (such as sobriety, curfews, and employment or education). This creates barriers that prevent access for those who seek support and assistance.

Rigid requirements and structured programming also create prescribed trajectories of healing and recovery. With the various overlapping issues that women and girls face, there needs to be room for the non-linear healing process. Each individual's recovery from trauma is different and the best way to offer support is by listening to what women say they want and need. This is not to discount the value of experienced professionals, but rather to centre the voices,

agency, and desires of experiential women and girls. Women and girls often perceive service providers and professionals as judgemental, which creates a barrier to accessing support and fostering the necessary trust in the service user-provider relationship.

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Community Needs Assessment

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The results of the community needs assessment is divided into five areas: Individual Women in their Communities, Youth Voicing their Needs, Needs of Agencies and Organizations (including frontline practices), Government and Legislation, and the Criminal Justice System.

1. Individual Women in their Communities

Putting women and girls at the centre of the needs assessment and the strategy is integral to a human rights and community-based approach to HTSE. The difficulty is that experiential women and girls are not necessarily available or willing to talk about or share their experiences. As such, most of the needs identified come second-hand through service providers and front line workers, as well as women working in the sex trade. These needs are not only for people who have experienced HTSE or related violence, but also extend to preventative measures, since these are by far the most effective means of ensuring women do not experience the violence of HTSE in the first place.

Supports & Services The largest category of need for individual women is support services. Service providers suggest that by enhancing and expanding existing services they would effectively be able meet the needs of survivors of trafficking and exploitation. In terms of better and promising practices, there are quite a few recommendations for what services should be offered or expanded, and how services should be delivered.

Frontline service providers offered up their insights into how services need to be offered to women and girls who may have been trafficked or exploited. They identified that clients and service users need to be met where they are at. This means not forcing labels or rigid standards: services need to be voluntary, flexible, and unconditional to meet the needs of women and girls. The idea that supports are voluntary is particularly important for a population who has been forced or coerced into unwanted situations. The flexibility of services is important because each individual's experiences and circumstances are unique. Having a rigid protocol that does not allow for flexibility prevents service users from addressing what they identify as most important

to them. Putting unnecessary or unattainable conditions and expectations on service users is also a barrier for building trusting and long-term relationships. For example, requiring sobriety of a drug user will prevent them from reaching out if they relapse on their recovery.

Trauma Informed Practice Using a trauma informed approach is also critical for addressing the needs of women who have been trafficked or exploited. The depth and degree of trauma associated with HTSE cannot be ignored, nor can the likely possibility that these women and girls have experienced other traumatic events in their lives (e.g. the intergenerational trauma of colonialism and residential schools). Trauma-informed practices require all services and staff to be non-judgemental, critical, and aware of structural oppressions. Trauma-informed also means respecting service users own meaning-making of their experiences.

"Trauma-informed services recognize that the core of any service is genuine, authentic and compassionate relationships." (Bolton, Buck, Connors et al., 2013)

As women and girls continue in recovery and rebuilding their lives, services need to be consistent and reliable. When women and girls are ready, services and supports can be gradually and slowly removed. Fixed terms and time limitations that put an abrupt end to support are ineffective and contribute to some frontline workers supporting people outside of their official case load.

"*Memories are bigger than their [women's] dreams*" – NB service provider

The types of services necessary for supporting and empowering survivors of HTSE are numerous given the unique, individualized needs of trauma survivors. The individual care services identified include barrier free access to mental and physical health care, including counselling and peer support services. These services need to be offered in a way that allows women to choose who they want to include in their support network, and what services they need to access. For example women and girls need to be able to choose their counsellor, have someone trusted to accompany them to appointments, select an apartment than fits their needs, and be empowered to take the lead on developing a plan for the future. Peer-support is also beneficial to some people's healing. The peer support role needs to include training and when possible include compensation and ongoing support for those doing peer support work. Since

healing is not linear, and ongoing support is critical to supporting trauma recovery, these services need to be available consistently and for as long as women require.

Substance Use and Addictions HTSE is closely linked with drug use and abuse, therefore special attention needs to be paid to substance use and recovery in strategizing around HTSE. Drugs are used as a means of coercion into providing sexual services, or existing substance addictions are used to compel people into exploitative situations. The compounding nature of drug use and exploitation makes some survivors needs for services more complex. Specifically, service providers identified the delays between detox and long-term residential care as a barrier to recovery. They also identified a need for alternatives to faith-based residential programming.

Social Services Aside from personal support and development, broader social services for women's health and wellbeing, are also critical for the prevention and intervention of HTSE. Affordable, safe housing as per the Housing-First model is critical for those whose living situations are often connected to their exploitation. Since each woman's situation is unique, rigid housing policies and rules make it difficult to access and maintain safe housing. For example, when violence and exploitation occur in the home, but there are no other options for safe or affordable house, it may become difficult to move beyond the trauma associated with that house or neighbourhood. Alternatively, requiring women to leave their communities to access safe, affordable housing, is also problematic. It can mean leaving a safety and support network behind and living in isolation. This highlights the need for flexible, women and girls-centred housing policies.

Inadequate income assistance rates and unlivable minimum wages are root causes of exploitation and trafficking. Insufficient income and wages lead many to supplement through underground economies such as sex and drug trades, which put people at risk of further exploitation. Furthermore, entering the sex trade may be one of a very limited number of options for women who cannot support their children and families on income assistance or a meager wage. This is also linked to the undervaluing of traditionally women's labour including child and elder care. When meaningful or lucrative employment is out of reach for women, the sex trade provides an enticing respite from the exploitative labour market of food service and care-giving work. It is doubly difficult when women have been in the sex trade (whether by choice or

trafficking) to access work such as care-giving jobs, because they are known in their communities, or may have a criminal history related to sex-work.

Involvement with the Justice System Another difficulty for women exiting the violence of HTSE is the lack of legal representation, support and advocacy. Similarly to legal actions involving IPV and sexual assault, the victims of trafficking and exploitation are scrutinized for their participation in their victimization. In cases where the woman is or was also a STW, they are more likely to be criminalized and penalized, than treated as a victim of a crime. Even though prostitution is no longer a criminal offence per se, there are still very negative (and sometimes violent) socio-cultural attitudes and actions toward women selling sexual services. These deeply embedded attitudes are much more difficult to change than legislation which now positions all STWs as victims. One challenge for women is when they are required to cooperate with law enforcement in order to access support because law enforcement and the justice system contribute to their trauma. Having a non-judgemental legal advocate or supporter from outside the justice system is an important ally for women to feel both safe and represented in a complex, alienating legal bureaucracy.

Child Welfare System The child welfare system is another difficult system to navigate that is closely linked to HTSE. Youth in and from care are disproportionately linked to cases of trafficking and exploitation:

> "Youth within the [child welfare] system are more vulnerable to becoming sexually exploited because youth accept and normalize the experience of being used as an object of financial gain by people who are supposed to care for us, we experience various people who control our lives, and we lack the opportunity to gain meaningful relationships and attachments." - Withelma "T" Ortiz Walker Pettigrew (2013, a survivor, addressing the United States House of Congress, as cited in Mapp, 2016, p. 18).

These experiences of objectification and breach of trust make young people in care more vulnerable to grooming since they are seeking the security and acceptance offered by traffickers and exploiters. Correspondingly, biological families can also act as exploiters before the child is taken into care. In these cases social workers need to recognize the exploitative situation and seek appropriate support services. When a child is taken from an exploitative parent and into care they need trauma-informed services and supports in order to help them move toward healthy

relationships with themselves and others. Many campaigns and policies focus on the so-called 'girl next door' (as evidenced by the proposed "Saving the Girl Next Door Act" in Ontario) and the fact that young person is at risk of, or can trafficked. While it may be true that anyone is at risk of trafficking, we need to be honest about who is disproportionately targeted and impacted by trafficking and exploitation. Young people in and from the care system, or who are homeless need to be considered worthy of our concern and attention, not just the "girl next door." Once again, education (beyond the definitions and sensationalized stories of HTSE) is critical. In order to be aware of, understand, and help prevent trafficking and exploitation, education needs to be accurate and reflective of real life situations, and it needs to amplify experiential voices. While ideally everyone needs to learn about HTSE, there also needs to be more in-depth messages for parents, foster parents, social workers, youth workers, teachers and youth themselves.

     Sex Trade Workers (STWs) There is a precarious relationship between STWs and the movement to end human trafficking. Education and awareness about trafficking and exploitation is important to the STWs. They express a want and need for the opportunity, language, and spaces to talk about these issues. Unfortunately, most discussions about trafficking and exploitation are happening in ways that alienate or shame women who sell sex. Sometimes going to so far as to deny STWs self-determination, or blame STWs for their experiences of work-related violence. This type of alienation and shame pushes those most connected to the industry out of the conversation and marginalizes their voices and needs. STWs are aware that their work puts them at greater risk for exploitation and trafficking. They know this better than anyone else. However, they identify this increased risk not as inherent to their work, but as a result of the labour conditions. From their perspectives, the increased risk of exploitation and trafficking is due to their precarious legal and social status of workers and the underground nature of the trade.

     STWs who were consulted identified several issues and needs related to their work. The overarching theme of issues and needs was safety. First, they suggested the need for a safety net of some kind including help with safety planning in the event of danger, and preventative measures such as having someone to call and check in with when meeting with clients. Their own personal health was also a safety concern. They want and need sexual health services that are anonymous and explicitly non-judgemental. Even when they had access to a primary care physician, this was not necessarily where they felt comfortable going for regular sexual health

check-ups. This type of stigma in the healthcare system contributed to feelings of isolation around their work exacerbating fears for safety and wellbeing. Furthermore, it speaks to the unwavering need for non-stigmatized spaces to access services from non-judgemental providers.

One STW talked about feeling unsafe because she meets clients in dark parking lots or abandoned spaces for discretion and secrecy. Her ideal was a sex-worker run cooperative, where she sets her own hours and has control over the types of services she provides. This ideal also reinforces the need for peer-to-peer connection around safety practices and the opportunity to debrief emotionally after working. This peer support could be a formal program, or an informal network to provide support and connection. Service providers who work with STWs on the streets cited the need for safer spaces where women can access running water and toilets as well as programming and support services. If STWs work hidden from the public eye, they are isolated and fearful of violence. Alternatively, if they are in public or on the streets they encounter the violence of shame or harassment for loitering.

Consequently, STW identified the decriminalization of all behaviours and actors in the sex industry as necessary for their safety. The movement for decriminalization is not limited to the sex workers themselves, but extends to their clients, and people they work with for security, transportation and booking. The fear of criminalization and arrest prevents women whose situations are, or may become exploitative from accessing supports and services. The need for security and transportation services stems from the absence of legal protections, and these support people are not always exploiting STWs. Furthermore, STWs identified that criminalizing their clients hindered their ability to screen their clients. It was also a concern because clients were identified as a group of people who could potentially help identify exploitation and support STWs who are being exploited to find safety.

The stigmatization and shame of sex work was at the forefront of these discussions. One STW who had been "outed" in her community felt like she had nothing left to lose. Having been publicly shamed for her involvement in the sex industry, she knew first-hand how the stigma of sex work can be isolating and hurtful. She talked about wanting to be an advocate for herself and colleagues, but not knowing how to do this effectively. Specifically, she wanted to find a way to connect and support other sex trade workers. She emphasized that she engaged in STW because she had no other viable options for making a livable income, but was also aware that it might

hinder her ability to find other employment. Another STW described how no one in her life knows she does this work and how she is deeply ashamed. The shame however was secondary to her need to supplement her income to support her family including children, siblings, and aging parents. She described feeling exploited by her "straight" job that doesn't offer a livable wage and by a system that left her with no other options.

One problem with the services available is that women and girls do not know about them, or where and how to access them. Often services are only available from 9am to 5pm and in larger cities. As such, they are not available during a time of crisis or need such as a weekend, or in rural communities. The other issue with access is that many do not see their situation as "bad enough" to warrant reaching out, or do not want to be associated with other people who do access those services. This type of stigma is deeply rooted and the result is that services are reactionary in nature and they are accessed only while in, or after a crisis.

With all of these complexities and sometimes conflicting needs, there is one universal thing that experiential women and girls need and deserve: respect. Respect for the complexity of their situations and circumstances. Respect for their choices and for the fact that all choices are made within the constraints of oppressions which are beyond their control. Respect for their autonomy and self-determination, ability to make meaning of their situations. Respect for their labour and voices. Respect for their ability to guide their own healing and create their own path to living well.

2. Youth Voicing their Needs

The young people who took part in the two focus groups are by no means representative of all youth, however they did share their own diverse understandings and experiences. A key piece of information gleaned from the focus groups is that the language of "human trafficking" does not resonate and was difficult for young people to relate HTSE to their own lives and experiences. Unsurprisingly, the words "human trafficking" conjured images of poor women from foreign countries. The young people however were really interested and receptive to learning more about the domestic trafficking and exploitation that happens in New Brunswick. They were surprised to hear HTSE happened in Canada and concerned that no one was talking about it.

Sex Positive Approaches While the youth were reticent to talk about HTSE because they were not familiar with the language or terminology, they quickly identified many issues related to HTSE that concerned them. One issue was the need for earlier and more positive sex education. They talked about needing to have the language to talk about sex and sexual violence and learn more about negotiating sexual relationships. There were also discussions about healthy relationship dynamics. Some young people expressed that the relationships modelled for them at home were not necessarily positive or healthy, but no alternative or positive model was every discussed with them. It was not simply sex-education and healthy relationship curriculum they were looking for though. They also described a need for adult allies and mentors with whom to have open, non-judgemental conversations about sex and sexual and romantic relationships.

Self-love and Connection Young women were also adamant that their self-worth and self-esteem were poor and that they needed more support to develop self-love in order to live more positive, healthy lives. They identified this as a chronic issue both personally and in the larger social context. A few young women described their motivation for having sex as the pursuit of social connectedness and feeling loved. One young woman described how "wanting to feel cared for" was the most valuable part of sex for her. Feeling cared for was a critical, but elusive part of her self-worth that she accessed through sexual relationships with men. Many of the young women were looking for empathy, acceptance, and love. They desire kindness and respect, even though they did not always feel like they deserved it. The devastating part of these discussions is that they did not have anyone in their lives that made them feel worthy of love, but knew that they needed that. When asked about they needed from adult supports said they needed to feel listened to and be included in discussions rather than lectured about things. They were looking for mentorship and long-term supportive connections with trustworthy people to help them build and learn about healthy relationships. What this speaks to in relation to HTSE is that traffickers have something valuable that these young women want and need, and it is not something a governmental service or community agency can really provide.

It is not only the immaterial that young women gain from having sex. Once focus group spoke extensively about sex-in-exchange. In this, young women described having sex with people (friends, older men, strangers) in exchange for goods, a place to sleep, food, money and anything else they needed. This sex-in-exchange though, was not considered "sex trade work".

The young women's perceptions of STWs mirrored societal values which stigmatizes and dehumanizes women in the trade. When they engaged in sex-in-exchange, this was perceived as a separate, distinct endeavour: "*Because you just do what you have to to survive, especially for women*" (young woman during a focus group). Sex-in-exchange was also about more than survival, it was also accompanied by a sense of agency and power. One young women described how she felt like she was exploiting the men she had sex with. She described sex as her source of power, which was an important feeling for young women who are afforded little individual power in their lives and have even less social control.

Services and Supports The services and supports desired and requested by young women are very similar to the needs of adult women. They include wrap-around services delivered through a person or agency that they know, and with whom the can develop long-term trusting relationships. Sometimes parents, family, and friends were important to include in service provision. This acknowledges that these situations do not happen in a social vacuum, but in fact speak to the importance of social context and the impact of much deeper social issues. Conversely, others expressed that sometimes families and parents were a part of the problem. This reiterates that young women need their experiences and ideas to be listened to and respected. If they do not want a family member or service provider involved, that needs to be respected and alternatives explored.

The same idea applies to experiences with formal service providers and institutions. For some young people schools and educational institutions are safe havens of escape, however for others they are a source of conflict and distress. At the focus groups some young people were concerned that their only access point to support services was through their guidance counsellor or the school. If their relationship with that adult or institution is negative or they cannot trust their information and story to be confidential, then there need to be alternative points of access. The most important thing for them was to have someone who really cares supporting them, rather than someone following policy and procedure. This further reinforces the need for connection and relationships that permeates this needs assessment.

"*Got no choice, need to survive*" – Young woman during a focus group

Another unsurprising commonality between adult women and youth was the need for real choices and opportunities. This included liveable wages in order to live a secure, comfortable

lifestyle rather than living in perpetual poverty. First Nations youth requested access to their ancestral lands and cultural practices in addition to autonomy and respect for Indigenous peoples. While one Indigenous women described having a supportive parent, she desired a broader connectedness and purpose through cultural and familial relationships. In this same vein, youth also wanted to opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them in a supportive environment rather than being criminalized or going to jail. The desire to test their own limits and exercise self-determination was the uniting factor in their desire for opportunities around work, life, and a happy future. In the simplest way, these youth were asking for the right to experience childhood and grow gradually into adulthood. Unfortunately, these seemingly simple opportunities have been denied to them because of structural inadequacies and systems failures.

3. Needs of Agencies and Organizations

Community agencies and service providers identified a number items that they require to be able to effectively provide the services needed by women and girls who are at risk of being trafficking, or how have experienced HTSE. Among these are training and education, cooperation and collaborations, sustainable funding and resources, as well as number of key frontline practices.

Training and education Service providers at all levels (frontline workers to directors) were interested to hear about this project and know more about HTSE in New Brunswick. HTSE was something most people were familiar with but had not had the opportunity to discuss directly or in any detail. Most service providers had some idea about what trafficking entailed but were uncertain about the definition of trafficking and how it happens domestically. As definitions and examples were discussed some service providers realized how likely it was that they had encountered trafficking, but were unaware of it. Typically, after providing a definition of trafficking and explaining the three components (the act, means and purpose), a dialogue ensued about whether particular stories or cases could be classified as trafficking. This speaks to the articulated need for training and ongoing dialogue about the state of HTSE in the NB and Canadian contexts.

Service providers specifically requested training on how to identify potential trafficking situations, promising practices for what to do in the case of suspected trafficking, what questions to ask a suspected victim or survivor, and how to provide non-judgemental support. One

recurring request that training include the voices of HTSE survivors and sex workers. The acknowledgement that HTSE is complicated in how it relates to the voluntary sex trade sparked a further desire to hear first-hand accounts from women who had survived trafficking experiences and those who work in the sex-trade. The other piece to this desired training was a checklist or tool kit for identifying trafficking situations (or risky situations) and the types of questions and relationships that will be most supportive.

Another related issue was the language around trafficking and understanding the most meaningful language for women and girls. Of particular concern were those women and girls who do not necessarily identify with the label of human trafficking, or who do not perceive their situation to be exploitative. There was a clear disconnect between how this type of VAW is talked about on the policy level and how some experiential women describe it. This will be a key issue in moving forward in creating a strategy that is relevant and effective for women.

Finally, it was identified that many front line workers who specialize in VAW are not the most likely interveners because their supports and services are not necessarily accessible to women and girls who are in the middle of a trafficking situation. As such it was suggested that training be offered to a broader spectrum of professionals including those in the health care field (physicians in walk-in clinics, emergency room personnel, sexual health educators and staff in sexual health clinics). By expanding the scope of HTSE training and education, more individuals are empowered to recognize, understand and provide support to women and girls.

"When you have relationships, you get the stories" – NB service provider

Coordination and Collaboration In the context of HTSE, one major barrier to coordination and collaboration are the different definitions and approaches to trafficking. No strategy is going to align the various ideologies that inform the disparate approaches to HTSE, but some common ground might be found in acknowledging that women and girls in NB require diverse possibilities for accessing services and moving through their traumas. It is also necessary that organizations consider the assumptions made by their existing policies and clarify the intentions and ideologies that inform their work. Part of this may be a more open dialogue on discussions of abolitionist and sex worker rights movements.

Similarly to experiential women and girls, service providers and front line works also most readily trust those with whom they have developed relationships. Thus formal collaboration at the agency level is not sufficient for effective partnerships, collaboration must also foster trusting, mutual relationships between the people who work at and with these agencies. Unfortunately, there are often barriers to community partnerships related to funding opportunities or differences in approach to issues, which requires a cultural shift in community collaboration. Working toward a more open and sharing community of practice was acknowledged as necessary in order to be able to provide the most effective supports and services for women.

Beyond a cultural shift in community agency relations, there was also a call for formalized referral protocols for services users who identify themselves as trafficked, or whose circumstances meet some criteria for trafficking or exploitation. This referral system requires that providers know the services offered by other agencies in their community and throughout province, and understand where the gaps in services are in communities. This type of referral protocol would also ideal work on a wrap-around model where experiential women and girls could gain access to various services and providers and be supported in the process. In addition, to being more effective for experiential women, a single access point for services also enables HTSE supports to be integrated within other community services. This has a two-fold purpose: first, so that non-identifying experiential women can get the services they need without having to label their experience as trafficking. And second, it enables for more neutral locations of services so that certain offices or agencies do not become stigmatized.

At present law enforcement is the primary agent in addressing HTSE. However, many service providers noted that they would be hesitant to contact law enforcement because they do not wish to put their client or service user at further risk of traumatization or criminalization. It was identified that there needs to be someone, or somewhere other than law enforcement to call if there is a suspected case of HTSE. This, of course is difficult in situations that may be or become violent and require police assistance. This suggests there is a need for greater cooperation and collaboration between police services and other agencies. The dearth of trust needs to be remedied in the pursuit of a long-term plan for addressing trafficking and supporting women to live free from violence, coercion, and fear. It also speaks to the need for a social

services or outreach perspective that specializes in trafficking situations. While one front-line worker noted, "we're all generalists" there was a desire to have someone to call or reach out to who has more specialized knowledge and deeper understanding of both the issue and established connections to the various parties and services that may need to be involved. Some sort of non-police, community HTSE coordinator was suggested by many different people in order to provide ongoing trainings and support, and act as a hub for information and service coordination.

Frontline Practices While law enforcement have their own criteria and mandate that are reflected in their practices, social service workers outlined their own criteria and practices for working respectfully and effectively with experiential women. It was important for providers that there be some consistency in how services were provided. By aligning frontline practices, service providers felt it would bolster collaboration and trust between agencies.

The first critical practice is listening and believing women. By listening, service providers are able to meet users where they are at, rather than requiring specific criteria (such as sobriety or police cooperation) be met before providing support. This is especially critical for women and girls who have experienced HTSE or elements of HTSE like coercion and exploitation who risk being re-traumatized. HTSE often includes restricted self-determination and autonomy, as such healing and support needs to augment these rather than impinge on them. For many the best practices centre on women and girls leading and guiding their own healing and planning, never saying "You should…" but rather "What can we do?"

Since each trafficking survivor is unique in how they feel about and respond to their situation, frontline services and support must be responsive to these needs. Women and girls need to be considered individually and included in their case or care plans. This requires that protocols and procedures be flexible and adaptable as well as quick and responsive. Ideally intra-and inter-agency protocols (such as referrals and consent to share case information) would evolve and change as experiential women and girls provide feedback.

Additionally, service users may require services for differing lengths of time. Limitations on how long a service can be used or accessed was an issue for many frontline workers who described the limitations as inhibiting healing and detrimental to their ability to build effective, trusting relationships. This was similar to the concern about the limited number of people working directly with women and girls. Some organizations questioned the need for an HTSE

strategy when there was no funding for positions to do direct practice. With the clandestine nature of trafficking, it is important to have direct outreach, or "feet on the street" offering supplies, information and developing relationships. Having outreach workers who are known in the community and trusted is considered a critical component to preventing and identifying trafficking.

Funding Unsurprisingly, funding was persistently cited as an issue for community agencies and organizations. The need for sustainable, core funding to provide sufficient wages and establish positive working environments for employees is made difficult by the lack of sustainable, consistent funding opportunities. The lack of funding means a reliance on volunteers to do skilled work and the inability to attract skilled workers. This is particularly troubling when incorporating peer-to-peer models, where peers should be compensated for their work and experiential knowledge. This has the side-effect of also inhibiting organizations' capacities to provide consistent and effective services. A focus on innovation for granting bodies means that promising practices are abandoned for creative, but untested strategies. The other issue with funding was the considerable time agencies and organizations spend trying to secure funding. This was seen as directly impacting their ability to provide the necessarily and critical services and programs they offer.

4. Government and Legislation

The government has a large role to play in creating and sustaining a strategy to end HTSE. Many of the needs around preventing HTSE are directly related to government investment in social and health programs. Currently, social programs, education, and health care are inadequate and contribute to the climate in which HTSE thrives. By investing more in these types of indirect, preventative measures, government can support the goal to end trafficking from its root causes. A few key measures include: A guaranteed income or liveable minimum wage, affordable, livable housing in accessible, safe communities, access to restorative and alternative justice measures, affordable child care, sex-positive sex education and healthy relationships programs, sexual health services, mental health and addictions counselling and ongoing recovery support. While some of these programs do exist, they need to be expanded, improved and made more accessible for service users. Although there are some services available for people who

meet certain criteria, additional training about HTSE, and partnerships between government and community would facilitate more effective and accessible programming and services.

Accessibility Government bureaucracies are difficult to navigate, which highlights the need for improved, and stream-lined communication between government departments, levels of government, and with community agencies and individuals. Presently communications were identified as insufficient and ineffective to prevent and intervene on trafficking cases. One major barrier for everyone, including government employees, experiential women and girls, and service providers is not knowing who to contact or who is responsible for an issue or program. This becomes particularly troubling when the window for accessing assistance and support is very small, such as the case of women being trafficked through the province and only staying a short time. Coordinating efforts, such that "every door is the right door" to access support is a worthy goal.

Immigration and Newcomers Most discussions during consultations focused on domestic HTSE, however there was concern about current immigration policies and the precarious status of temporary foreign workers. Recognizing that there is growing immigrant and migrant population in NB, these issues need to be integrated into the strategy. More services offered need to be culturally appropriate and adaptive to a heterogeneous population. In NB, this area of concern needs to focus on policy and labour regulations as a preventative measure.

Legislation There is currently no HTSE specific legislation at the provincial level. As such, the main concern was Federal legislation: Bill C-36, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act. Bill C-36 was introduced in 2015 as a response to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford. Community agencies and sex workers stated that this legislation perpetuates the criminalization and stigmatization of sex workers. According to the Bill, STWs are considered victims, however they can still be arrested and charged with prostitution. While criminalization is a deterrent for some people, it is a reactionary measure. Working in the sex trade can be the best of a very limited array of choices and opportunities. Criminalizing sex workers, sex consumers, and those who support them (such as security and transportation) endangers women by requiring them to move further underground and work in isolation to avoid encountering law enforcement. It also means they have no recourse to address any violence that happens at work or home because they risk being arrested,

charged, or exposed to further violence. The ongoing fear of arrest, coupled with the secrecy, stigma and isolation of the sex trade is cited by sex workers as contributing to their risk of violence rather than enhancing their safety. If women and girls are to be at the centre of this strategy, we must listen to and heed their concerns and ideas at the legislative and policy level. If we want to shed light on trafficking and related offences, women need to feel safe to discuss and disclose their experiences without fear of arrest, criminalization, or discrimination.

5. The Criminal Justice System

Similar to the needs of service providers and community agencies, training and education for law enforcement, prosecutors and judges was identified as a crucial component for moving forward. For law enforcement officials HTSE education needs to extend beyond understanding the definition of HTSE toward a deeper, nuanced understanding sex trade work, trauma-informed responses, and the needs of experiential women. For prosecutors and judges, the training needs to be around the legal precedence of human trafficking cases, restorative justice measures, and how to best incorporate survivors safely without re-traumatization.

"The key is to listen… we gotta listen" – NB police officer

Another requisite for law enforcement is accountability and consistency across officers and agencies. Currently, some individuals within law enforcement are trusted, however the institution of law enforcement as a whole is largely mistrusted and is thought to be inadequate at handling issues of VAW. There is a desire to see a more consistent approach from law enforcement in their handling of those people who are criminalized by social structures.

Working in connection with community service providers and experiential women, law enforcement needs to be invested in the community to build strong, reliable connections to those most at risk of criminalization and victimization. The history and ongoing practice arresting of sex workers for their own safety, or for sex work related activity concerned many frontline workers. Meaningful collaboration of any sort requires critical and nuanced perspectives on gender, racism, economic inequality, and the legacy of colonialism. By taking responsibility and being accountable for their role in perpetuating VAW, people of colour, and people living in poverty, law enforcement can move into a more integrated and effective role in preventing and ending trafficking. It was acknowledged that this may not be possible, however it seems

necessary to articulate some of these issues in order to move forward in partnership and collaboration.

Conclusion

A common thread throughout the community consultations was the need for ongoing cooperation, communication and partnership around issues of VAW, and HTSE specifically. With these complex issues and needs, the community needs to work together. No one person, agency, or institution can single-handedly address all the issues around trafficking and exploitation. Unfortunately, conflicting ideological approaches to HTSE complicate the collaborative efforts required. In response to these differences and in an effort to centre the strategy on women and girls, a human rights based, trauma-informed, intersectional and anti-oppressive focus is required. By moving beyond the narrow definition of trafficking and considering the issue in a larger context, it is more likely that this project will have a positive and relevant impact on women, girls and communities.

As the project enters its second year and this report is circulated, there will be a critical interpretation of these community needs into a set of actions and priorities. To guide this process an advisory team of diverse individuals, professionals and communities will be established (for more information on this team, or to join, please contact sjthiessen@partnersforyouth.ca). This team will work closely with the project coordinator to identify meaningful actions and initiatives around the province. These actions will support changing systems and structures that were identified as barriers to reducing and eliminating HTSE. The actions will also work toward expanding supports and services available to women and girls, including preventative measures. Through these processes and ongoing conversations about the HTSE we will bring people together to raise awareness about HTSE risk factors and indicators as well as the root causes of VAW.

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Appendix A.

<u>Agencies, Organizations and Individuals Consulted</u>

Adoption Council of Canada (Youth Speak Out)

AIDS Moncton

AIDS New Brunswick

AIDS Saint John

Bridges of Canada

Codiac RCMP (Youth at Risk team)

Coverdale Centre for Women

Crossroads for Women

Dept. of Public Health (Communicable Diseases)

Dept. of Public Safety (Victims Services)

Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Outreach (Community Health Centre Saint John)

Downtown Community Health Clinic (Fredericton)

First Steps Housing Project Inc.

Fredericton Police Force

Fredericton Sexual Assault Centre

Grace House (The Fredericton Homeless Shelters)

Dr. Leslie Jeffrey (UNB professor)

"J" (overnight hotel reception cleric)

Liberty Lane Inc.

Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre (UNB)

Patty Musgrave (Moncton Sex Work Steering Committee volunteer)

New Brunswick Women's Council (formerly Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum)

New Brunswick Multicultural Council

Partners for Youth Inc (Fredericton Outreach Services, NB Youth in Care Network)

Portage Atlantic

RCMP (J Division)

Regroupment Feministe du New Brunswick

Safe Harbour

SALVUS Clinic (Community Recovery Counsellor)

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners

Sophia Recovery Centre

Women's Equality Branch

Youth in Transition/Chrysalis House

YWCA Moncton

Youth focus groups

Portage Atlantic

Chrysalis House

Sex Trade Workers

"Sophie"

"M"